

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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R 101745Z JUL 78 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1288
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
USMISSION SINAI
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 16710

C O R R E C T E D COPY (ADD REF)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR EG PLO
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN/PLO CONTACTS CONTINUE

REF: CAIRO 14602

SUMMARY. GOE CONTACTS WITH PLO CONTINUE, INCLUDING ARAFAT APPEALS TO SADAT NOT TO WRITE OFF PLO, WHICH UNDER GREAT PRESSURE FROM SYRIA. SADAT, ALTHOUGH STILL PERCEIVING ARAFAT AS WEAK AND UNRELIABLE, PREFERS KEEP LINES OPEN TO PLO BUT WITHOUT MAKING ANY COMMITMENTS. PRESIDENT CONTINUES BELIEVE MODERATE FATAH LEADERSHIP, IN COOPERATION WITH INDIGENOUS WEST BANK/ GAZA LEADERSHIP, OFFERS BEST PROSPECT OF FUTURE PALES-
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TINIAN PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO SALAH HINDAWI, ONE OF MFA OFFICIALS DEALING WITH PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS, GOE IS CONTINUING ITS LOW-KEY CONTACTS WITH PLO. HINDAWI NOTED THAT FONMIN KAMEL OCCASIONALLY SEES ACTING PLO REP SAID KAMAL AND THAT SADAT AND ARAFAT STILL EXCHANGE MESSAGES.

(ACCORDING SADAT'S VERSION, ARAFAT IS REGULARLY SENDING APPEALS NOT TO WRITE THE PLO OFF AND NOTING THAT HE IS FORCED TO TAKE CERTAIN PUBLIC POSITIONS BECAUSE OF SYRIAN PRESSURE.) WE ALSO KNOW THAT MFA MINSTATE BOUTROS GHALI, WHEN HERE, FREQUENTLY SEES PLO REP AHMED DAJANI.

2. HINDAWI CLAIMED THAT THESE CONTINUING CONTACTS HAVE BEEN HELPFUL. THUS, FOR EXAMPLE, HE ASSERTS THAT PLO REPS WORKED WITH EGYPTIAN OBSERVERS AT NACC MEETING IN HAVANA IN ORDER TO MODERATE RESULTS OF MEETING.

3. HINDAWI ALSO CONTENDED THAT MODERATE PLO ELEMENTS, INCLUDING ARAFAT, APPRECIATE THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF SADAT'S INITIATIVE. (ARAFAT WAS AT THE PEOPLES ASSEMBLY WHEN SADAT ANNOUNCED HIS READINESS TO GO TO JERUSALEM.) PLO, HINDAWI REMARKED, AND ESPECIALLY FATAH, IS UNDER GREAT DEAL OF PRESSURE FROM SYRIA, IRAQ AND LIBYA, NOT TO MENTION SYRIAN PHYSICAL THREAT IN LEBANON. THESE PRESSURES, IN HINDAWI'S VIEW, PREVENT ARAFAT FROM BEING MORE POSITIVE ABOUT SADAT'S INITIATIVE OR TAKING A POSITION WHICH WOULD ALLOW HIM TO ENTER THE PEACE PROCESS. HINDAWI CONTENDED THAT MODERATE ELEMENTS OF FATAH, AGAIN INCLUDING ARAFAT, ARE WAITING FOR SOME KIND OF AN "OFFER" TO WHICH THEY CAN REACT MORE POSITIVELY. IN HINDAWI'S VIEW, SUCH AN "OFFER" WOULD BE THE PROMISE OR PROSPECT OF SOME KIND OF A PALESTINIAN ENTITY ON THE WEST BANK AND GAZA.

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4. COMMENT: PRESS ATTACKS ON ARAFAT AND PLO HAVE OF LATE BEEN MUTED. SADAT BELIEVES THAT ARAFAT, DESPITE HIS PUBLIC CRITICISM OF PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVE, IS UNEASY ABOUT BEING UNDER THE SYRIAN THUMB AND IS ANXIOUS TO MAINTAIN HIS CONTACTS WITH EGYPT. HENCE, THE CONTINUED FLOW OF MESSAGES FROM ARAFAT TO SADAT AND THE CONTINUED CONTACTS BETWEEN SENIOR MFA OFFICIALS AND PLO FUNCTIONARIES. THERE IS NO PRESENT EVIDENCE THAT SADAT HAS CHANGED HIS MIND ABOUT ARAFAT'S WEAKNESS AND UNRELIABILITY OR THAT THE PRESIDENT IS PREPARED FORMALLY TO RENOUNCE THE RABAT DECISION ON THE PLO. INSTEAD, HE CLEARLY PREFERS TO KEEP HIS LINES OPEN TO THE PLO, BUT WITHOUT APPARENTLY MAKING ANY PROMISES OR COMMITMENTS. TO BEST OUR KNOWLEDGE, SADAT CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT SOME KIND OF MODERATE FATAH LEADERSHIP (PERHAPS UNDER KHALID AL HASSAN), IN COOPERATION WITH INDIGENOUS WEST BANK/GAZA LEADERSHIP, OFFERS BEST PROSPECT OF PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE PEACE PROCESS. EILTS

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